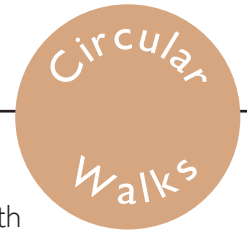


Taunton to Cotlake Hill

- Exploring Taunton Deane



General Information

Distance of Walk: 7.25 kilometres / 4.5 miles

This walk to the south of Taunton starts at the Market House and passes through Trull before gently ascending Cotlake Hill to give panoramic views of Taunton and the surrounding landscape.

OS map - Explorer 128,
Taunton and Blackdown Hills. Grid ref: 227 241.

Terrain - Level, with moderate ascent and descent from Cotlake Hill.

Parking - Crescent Car Park, High Street Car Park, Orchard Car Park, Fons George Car Park.

Refreshments - The Winchester Arms at Trull and numerous establishments in Taunton.

Landscape character of the walk - Low Vale

From the urban environment of Taunton, the walk traverses the Low Vale landscape south of the river flood plain, here rising to 73 metres at Cotlake Hill. Scattered throughout this gently undulating landscape are small pockets of mainly broadleaf woodland, the higher ground often accentuated by copses. Ash and oak are the dominant trees, and there are many standards in the hedgerows. There are numerous orchards and also a number of historic parklands, such as Poundisford to the south of Cotlake Hill. The underlying geology is predominantly marls, and the agricultural land is good quality, composed of pasture, arable and market gardening.

Directions

A From the Market House, walk south down the pedestrianised High Street towards the gates of Vivary Park. Having crossed the busy road at the end, go through the gates into Vivary park and follow the right hand path through the park crossing the stream by the bridge to the right. With the golf course on your left go through the small car park, turning left into Fons George. (A short detour to the right here will take you to the church of St. George). Continue straight along this road. Then when it turns right, continue ahead along the path (Cherry Tree Lane) to meet Churchill Way.

Continue straight along this road. When the road swings right a path leaves the road half left and then becomes a lane again with houses and bungalows (Cherry Tree Lane again).

B At the T-junction turn right along Sherford Lane for 100 metres and then go left over a bridge and right along the path by the stream. Continue to the estate road, where you bear right and follow the pavement with the stream on your right.

C Pass two footbridges and road bridge on your right and keep straight on (now on grass). Cross the footbridge on your right and bear left through the gate. Follow the path with the stream to your left through two more gates and continue diagonally across the field and through the gate onto the road. Turn left to Trull Church, go through the churchyard and on to the road and turn left passing Mill Lane.

D Opposite the Winchester Arms, enter the recreation ground and keep to the left hand hedge until, at the trees in the corner, follow the path down over the stream. Continue across the field, over the weir, then keep the stream to your left until the road is reached.

E Turn left onto the road and after 500 metres a T-junction will be reached at Brown's Elm Cottages. Turn left towards Trull, but 30 metres past the cottage garden go right through two gates into the field. Keep the hedge on your left and take the first opening on your left. Cross over the track and go straight ahead, keeping close to the right hand hedge until a farm gate onto a lane is reached.

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F Turn left, then immediately right to go over the stile. Follow the hedge on the right, and climb over the stile, up the steps and into the next field and bear right. At the top of the hill in the third field, bear right and go through the hedge in the corner to emerge on Cotlake Hill.

G The hedge is now on your left as you cross the stiles by some young trees and continue down the field to go through a gate on your left. Keep the hedge on your right to a gate and follow the well defined path down the field, bearing left at the bottom to cross a stile under a bank. Continue the line across the field to the gateway where the farm track crosses the cattle grid.

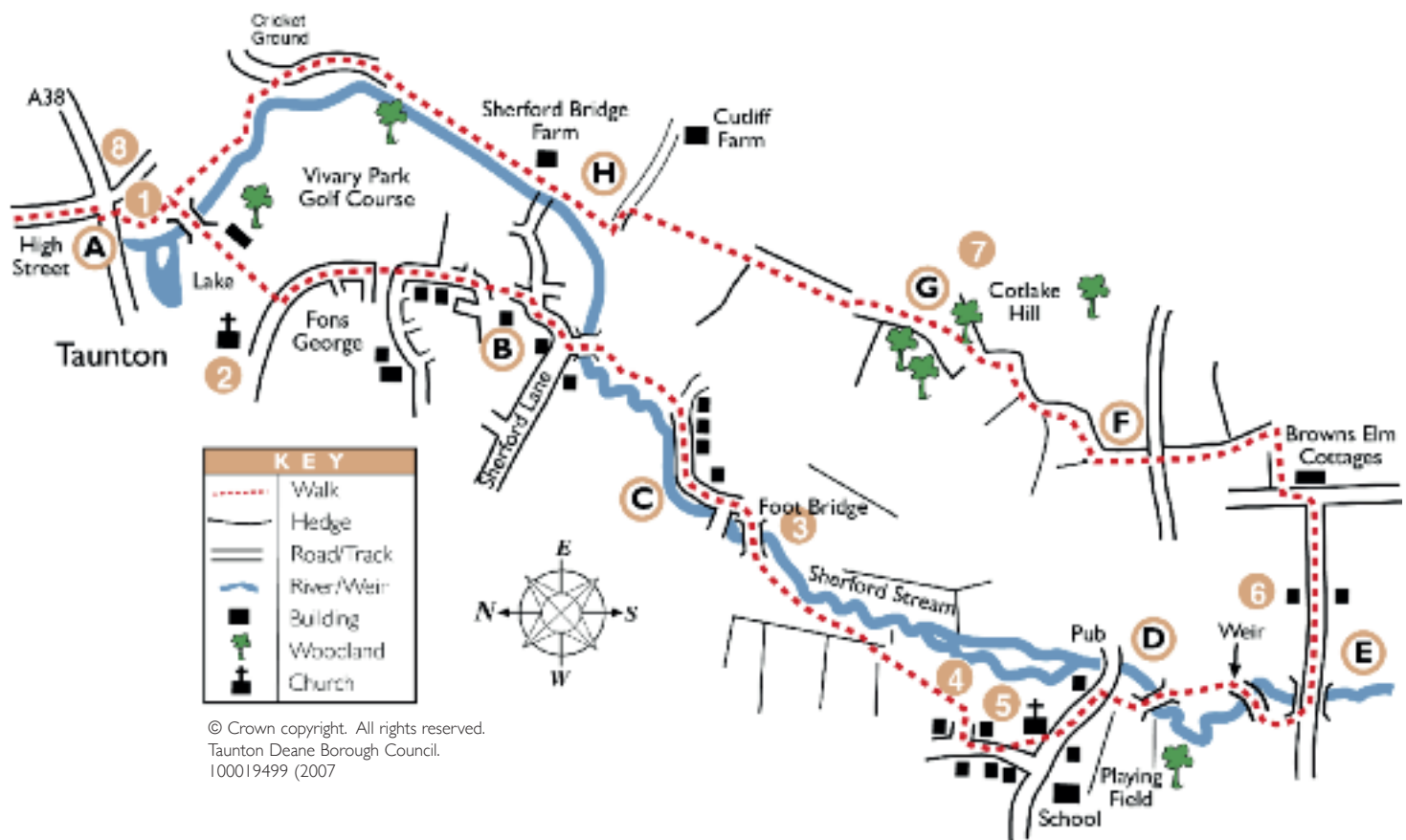
H Where the track bends left at Sherford Bridge Farm, continue ahead to go over a stile into a field. Keeping the stream on your left and crossing another stile, return to Vivary Park on the field path and then on the road passing the cricket ground.

Points of Interest

I Vivary Park

In the early 13th century the bishops of Taunton Priory maintained parklands for food and sport, such as Poundisford and Nailsbourne. In the area of the present Vivary Park there were two great ponds in which large quantities of fish were stocked, the bishop's 'vivarium'. The public park was laid out and opened in the mid 1890's, with very elaborate ironwork gates and a bandstand, both by Henry Phillips and Son of Taunton.

In 1907 a highly detailed fountain, cast by the Walter McFarlane and Co. Foundry of Glasgow, was unveiled by the Mayor in memory of Queen Victoria. The war memorial dates from 1922 and is by Ivor F Shellard. The artificially straight stream is a remnant of a former leat which was dug in the 14th century to carry water from the Sherford Stream to drive Poolwall Mill in Upper High Street and to supply the castle moat, as well as the market via sluices along the High Street.



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2 Church of St. George

This perpendicular style church was almost entirely rebuilt in the 19th century. There are traces of Saxon work in the west wall of the north aisle and in the nave some 13th century responds.

3 Sherford Stream

Flowing down from the Blackdown Hills and into the River Tone at Tangier, the name of this stream is said to derive from 'the brook in which dung is thrown'.

4 Veteran Tree

The oak tree standing in the corner of this field is well on its way to becoming a veteran tree. Veteran or ancient trees are important for the huge range of wildlife that they support, from large creatures such as owls, woodpeckers and bats, to a myriad of insects, and communities of extremely specialised lichens, mosses and fungi which play a vital role in the decomposition of deadwood. Many of these insects and plants can only survive in the special conditions afforded by ancient trees, which often contain large amounts of dead or rotting wood.

Britain (in particular England and Wales) has the largest number of ancient trees in north-west Europe. It is thought that this is the result of our peculiar history of land-use, in particular our ancient forest systems, deer parks, field and parish boundaries, landscaped parks, and wooded commons. It is difficult to produce a clear and satisfactory definition of an ancient tree.

They do however share a number of common features and can broadly be defined as 'trees that are of interest biologically, aesthetically, or culturally because of their age'.

The actual age and size at which a tree can be considered ancient varies enormously according to species. For example, a birch tree will probably not reach 200 years, a willow will be ancient at this age but an oak will just be maturing.

The oak in this field is perhaps three to four hundred years old. Its girth (measured at 1.3 metres from the ground) is 6.8 metres.

5 Church of All Saints, Trull

The oldest part of this church, the base of the tower, dates from the mid to late 13th century. At that time the church consisted of nave, chancel and tower. A south aisle was added in the 14th century and a north aisle a century later. The north doorway is thought to have been moved from the north wall of the 13th century nave.

The rood screen dates from the late 15th century and is an example of the fan-vaulted type that originated in Devon. The original tracery has now gone. Note the richly carved cornice. There is a remarkably well preserved 15th century wooden pulpit with undamaged carved figures of saints in canopied niches.

Many of the benches and bench ends date from the early 16th century and among the fine carving is an unusual collection of figures comprising a religious procession. In the churchyard the old stocks can be seen under a yew tree. The Chantry Cottage to the north west of the churchyard is late medieval in origin and was possibly the priest's house.

6 Amberd Farmhouse

A late medieval cross passage farmhouse with 16th century ceiling (a private dwelling).

7 Panoramic Views from Cotlake Hill

To the south and west can be seen the Blackdown Hills (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), rising to 315 metres at Staple Hill. Formed by an extensive outcrop of Upper Greensand from the Cretaceous period, they are characterised by a dramatic, steep, wooded scarp slope facing north, and a gently sloping plateau to the south which is deeply dissected by the valleys of the Rivers Culm, Otter and Yarty.

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To the north are the Quantock Hills (AONB), a narrow ridge of Devonian slates rising to 386 metres at Will's Neck. They represent the eastern end of a belt of Devonian rocks, collectively known as Old Red Sandstone, which extends from the coast near Ilfracombe eastwards to embrace Exmoor and the Brendon Hills. Below the Quantocks in the Vale of Taunton is a fine view of Taunton itself, the county town of Somerset.

8 Mount Street

As you return through Vivary Park, note the numerous listed houses in Mount Street. Taunton Deane has a rich inheritance of listed buildings. Approximately two thousand are grouped according to their importance, Grade 1, Grade 2* and Grade 2.

They are part of a national database, the Statutory List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest. Rising above Mount Street is 'Jellalabad', the former barracks of Prince Albert's Light Infantry completed in 1880.

If you require further information please contact:

Taunton Visitor Centre

Market House, Fore Street, Taunton TA1 1JD

Tel: 01823 340470

tauntonvisitorcentre@somerset.gov.uk

Web: www.visitsomerset.co.uk/taunton

Taunton Visitor Centre

For comments regarding the condition of the paths, stiles, gates etc. please contact Rights of Way at Somerset Council.
Tel: 0300 123 2224

